

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2079

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, SN

SUBJ: CIVAIR: SINGAPORE AIRLINES PLANS TO EXPAND 747 FLEET

REF: A. SINGAPORE 0257 (NOTAL); B. SINGAPORE 0828

1. LOCAL PRESS REPORTED ON OCCASION OF ARRIVAL IN SINGAPORE ON FEB 27 OF SINGAPORE AIRLINES (SIA) FOURTH BOEING 747 THAT SIA HOPED TO BUY A NEW JUMBO JET ANNUALLY FOR NEXT FEW YEARS. ACCORDING TO REPOCT, SIA HAS A CONTRACT WITH BOEING FOR DELIVERY OF THREE MORE 747 AIRCRAFT BY END OF 1977. SIA MANAGING DIRECTOR LIM CHIN BENG QUOTED AS SAYING THAT SIA NEEDED TO EXPAND ITS FLEET TO COPE WITH EXPECTED LARGE GROWTH IN TRAFFIC ON ROUTES TO LONDON, SYDNEY AND TOKYO. LIM ALSO REPORTEDLY SAID THERE WERE STRONG INDICATIONS THAT THE DEMAND FOR JUMBO AIRCRAFT WOULD INCREASE AS SIA "ADDS MORE NEW DESTINATIONS TO ITS NETWORK."

2. IN BRIEF CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, SIA PLANNING DIRECTOR PETER LAI PLAYED DOWN THE EXPANSION PROGRAM SOMEWHAT BY NOTING THAT THE THREE ADDITIONAL BOEING 747'S ARE ON OPTION ONLY. MOREOVER, ALTHOUGH SIA HAD PREVIOUSLY NOMINATED DELIVERY DATES, ONE EACH IN 1976, 1977 AND 1978 (CAUSING PRESS TO REPORT SIA PLANNED TO BUY A NEW JUMBO JET ANNUALLY), THE AIRLINE RECENTLY REQUESTED A DEFERRAL OF DATES

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FOR EXERCISING ITS OPTIONS.

3. FYI: THE NEW 747 WHICH ARRIVED ON FEB 27 REPORTEDLY CARRIED 17,000 KILOGRAMS GOLD BULLION, VALUED AT APPROXIMATELY US\$100 MILLION, BELONGING TO GOS AND RELEASED BY FEDERAL RESERVE BANK IN NEW YORK. SHIPMENT WAS PICKED UP IN NEW YORK BY NEW SIA 747 ON INAUGURAL FLIGHT. REFTEL REPORTS SIA EFFORTS TO OBTAIN PERMISSION PICK UP THIS CARGO AND WAIVE NEW YORK STATE LANDING TAX APPLICABLE TO FOREIGN CARRIER. ACCORDING TO SIA, PERMISSION CARRY CARGO OBTAINED BY CAB WITH NO PROBLEM BUT ISSUE OVER NEW YORK STATE TAX NOT YET RESOLVED AND SIA MAY BE LIABLE FOR FIVE-PERCENT TAX ON VALUE OF SHIPMENT. END FYI.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH LAI DECLINED TO SPECIFICALLY LINK PLANNED 747 PURCHASES TO SIA HOPES FOR A U.S. ROUTE, THE REPORTED REFERENCE BY SIA'S MANAGING DIRECTOR TO ADDING NEW DESTINATIONS PROBABLY MEANS THE U.S. IN JUNE (TENTATIVE DATE FOR NEXT BILATERAL) NEARLY A YEAR WILL HAVE ELAPSED SINCE GOS REQUESTED ROUTE TO U.S. WEST COAST. AT JULY 1974 TALKS, GOS SAID UBA PLANS FOR PASSENGER SERVICE WERE STILL 3 OR 4 YEARS AWAY BUT USDEL FELT THAT SIA DESIRE FOR ROUTE TO U.S. WAS CLOSER (POSSIBLY WITHIN 1 TO 2 YEARS) AND THAT SIA REQUEST FOR FREIGHT SERVICE MIGHT COME MUCH SOONER. CRONK

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